distinguished personalities, organizing of seminars, and grant of scholarships to students from these countries are already in existence in Islamic countries. In addition the ICCR has Cultural Centres in Cairo (Egypt), Almaty (Kazakhstan), Tashkent (Uzbekistan) and Jakarta (Indonesia), and Chairs of Indian Studies in Ankara (Turkey) and Bishkek (Kyrgyzstan). The Council also publishes a Quarterly journal in Arabic entitled "Taqafatue-Hind".

India's membership of Security Council

2511. SHRI RAJUBHAI A. PARMAR:
SHRIMATI VEENA VERMA:

Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) whether the French President during his recent visit to New Delhi on the Republic Day 1998, observed that India had the credentials for permanent membership of the UN Security Council; and

(b) if so, whether he had given any assurance of support to India, tacit direct or indirect to India's claim for such membership, if so, the details in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRIMATI VASUNDHARA RAJE): (a) and (b) President Chirac during his visit to India in January 1998 had stated that it was India's "Vocation" and "aptitude" to become a permanent member of the Security Council. France has supported inclusion of developing countries in permanent member category of the UN Security Council.

Pakistan Government's response for Bilateral Talks

2512. SHRI RAJUBHAI A. PARMAR:
SHRIMATI VEENA VERMA:

Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) what is the Pakistan Government's response for bilateral talks between India and Pakistan, as proposed by the Prime Minister,

(b) whether the Government have refused to start a dialogue without a mediator, and

(c) whether any talks with or without mediation have been held or are likely to be held; if so, the details in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRIMATI VASUNDHARA RAJE): (a) The Prime Minister of Pakistan on 23 June, 1998 replied to the Prime Minister's letter of 14 June, 1998 and agreed with Prime Minister's view that they should hold bilateral discussions on all issues of concern during the SAARC Summit in Colombo.

(b) and (c) India remains committed to fostering a relationship of trust friendship and cooperation with Pakistan. Government believe that it is possible to do so only through direct bilateral dialogue. Pakistan, however, has constantly sought mediation in our bilateral relations. Government have made it clear that there is absolutely no question of any international or third party mediation of any kind whatsoever in India-Pakistan bilateral relations. This view has been made publicly known through official statements as well as interaction with all concerned at the political and diplomatic levels.

Prohibition on Indian scientists from visiting countries

2513. SHRI JANARDHANA POOJARY: Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government are aware that countries which have imposed sanctions on India propose to prohibit India scientists from visiting those countries; and

(b) if so, Government's reaction thereto?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRIMATI VASUNDHARA RAJE): (a) and (b) Government have seen reports in the media that some countries seek to restrict the visit of Indian scientists to those countries. There have been instances where such restrictions were imposed on India scientists. Only Canada has sent written instructions to the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) that in light of India's testing of nuclear explosive devices, the Government of Canada would not welcome participation of nuclear experts from India in meetings in Canada until further notice. A few other countries have informally conveyed similar views or delayed visas to Indian scientists, Government is keeping a watch on developments in this regard.

Consulates opened by India and China

2514. SHRI ASHOK MITRA: Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) the number of Consulates and Sub-consulates opened by the People's Republic of China in our country;

(b) the number of Consulates and Sub-consulates opened by the Government of India in China; and

(c) whether a periodic review is undertaken of the nature of work performed by these cosular offices and whether any change is contemplated in their location and activities in consultation with the Government of the People's Republic of China?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRIMATI VASUNDHARA RAJE): (a) China has a Consulate in Mumbai.

(b) India has a Consulate in Shanghai in China. We continue to maintain our Consulate General in Hong Kong after assumption of sovereignty over Hong Kong by China on July 1, 1997.

(c) A periodic review is done of the work performed by our Consulates. At present there is no proposal under consideration for relocation.

"Most Favoured Nation" status to Pakistan

2515. SHRI S.M. KRISHNA: Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) whether India has granted 'Most Favoured Nation' status to Pakistan;

(b) if so, whether Pakistan has also reciprocated;

(c) if not, the reaction of Government thereto; and

(d) what steps Government have taken to urge Pakistan to fulfil WTO obligations?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRIMATI VASUNDHARA RAJE): (a) to (d) In accordance with its obligations under the WTO, and earlier as a signatory to GATT, India extended MFN status to Pakistan.

On the other hand Pakistan, in spite of its membership of the WTO, and earlier of GATT, has not accorded MFN status to India. Government have officially on several occasions urged Pakistan to fulfil its obligations under the WTO and extend MFN status to India. It has regrettably not done so.

Ministers of Pakistan Government have from time to time linked the grant to MFN status to India to extraneous issues.

We will continue to urge Pakistan to fulfil its obligations.

Offer of unilateral disarmament

2516. SHRI VAYLAR RAVI: Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) whether he has offered unilateral disarmament of the nation;

(b) if so, what are the compulsions for making such an offer; and